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TO ALL NEAR EAST COLLECTIVE
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RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA 1414
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RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 1944
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT 0046
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 1779
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 8916
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE 8131
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR 2423
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI 6552
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 3078

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 STATE 127670

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DEPT PASS USDA FOR FOREST SERVICE
INTERIOR FOR DIR INT AFFAIRS
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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [SENV](#) [TBIO](#) [KSCA](#) [XD](#) [XF](#) [ZK](#)
SUBJECT: 2008 ESTH CONFERENCE, CAIRO

Summary

¶1. From October 7-9, OES hosted a conference for Environment, Science and Technology, and Health (ESTH) officers and local hires from the Near East Affairs (NEA) and South and Central Asia (SCA) regions to discuss ways to advance U.S. foreign policy on such key issues as climate change, renewable energy, Muslim world outreach, water management, environmental security, green buildings, avian influenza, and natural resource conservation. The ESTOC served to strengthen relationships between ESTH officers, Hub Officers and Washington; explain and clarify USG positions on OES priorities; develop concrete actions to address common challenges; and highlight possibilities for funding. We thank Embassy Cairo for going above and beyond the call of duty in organizing the conference. End summary.

----- NEA and SCA ESTOC: Developing Regional Ties -----

¶1. The October 7-9, NEA and SCA ESTH Officers Conference (ESTHOC) in Cairo, Egypt brought together representatives from a number of U.S. embassies in the Middle East and South and Central Asia as well as officials from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Department of State (DOS), the Department of Interior (DOI), and the Department of Agriculture (USDA). Regional non-governmental organization (NGO) representatives and academics also attended.

¶3. DCM Matthew Tueller welcomed participants to Cairo, and OES Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary (PDAS) Ambassador Reno Harnish kicked off the ESTHOC, stressing that ESTH is at the forefront of U.S. foreign policy. He noted OES's seven priority policy areas of focus: climate change, which is also at the top of the Secretary's agenda; China's impact on the world as it seeks access to natural resources; Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and environmental standards; conservation; polar regions; water resources; and S&T agreements. The Regional Environmental Hub officers (Manu Bhalla in Amman, Bruce Hudspeth in Astana and John Adams in Kathmandu) outlined the major concerns of their respective regions, noting that water management and allocation is key across both regions as a potential source of conflict. They also identified wildlife trafficking, climate change, uranium

tailings, and capacity building as priority issues. Subsequent breakout sessions allowed each region to focus in greater detail on possible follow-on actions in each area.

14. Each ESTH Officer briefed the group on the most important and germane ESTH issues for the country in which he/she is posted. This feedback was beneficial not only to the assembled group in identifying common issues, such as water and climate change but also in illustrating to the OES bureau what the posts see as the top ESTH priorities in each country. The Hub Officers highlighted the role they serve as an information source for ESTH officers and OES offices on trans-boundary issues.

Issues, Initiatives and Opportunities

15. Topics and initiatives highlighted included:

(a) Science and Technology Cooperation and Muslim World Outreach -- OES Office of Science and Technology Cooperation (STC) William Lawrence noted that Science and Technology (S&T) cooperation has proven to be a successful diplomatic tool in NEA, noting the successes of the recently signed Libya S&T agreement and technical exchanges which have already taken place under the agreement. There are 40 umbrella S&T agreements world-wide and 9 in the NEA and SCE

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regions that help facilitate scientific exchange, conferences and workshops. He encouraged attendees to work closely with Public Affairs Officers (PAOs) on science exchanges and to take advantage of the Science Fellow Program that will place scientists in embassies for a short period.

(b) Avian Influenza -- DOS Avian Influenza Action Group (AIAG) Kathleen Reddy-Smith noted that H5N1 avian influenza has not yet become the pandemic that the health community has feared (i.e. spread worldwide) but is spreading rapidly and in more than 62 countries, with the situation in Indonesia, Egypt, and Nigeria reaching the endemic stage (e.g., constantly present). She suggested that Posts continue to be proactive through their AI action groups and liaise with host governments on emergency preparedness measures.

(c) Health -- OES Office of International Health and Biodefense (IHB) Jehan Jones explained the global community's efforts to eradicate polio, which is endemic in four countries, three of which are in the SCA region (India, Pakistan and Afghanistan). Tuberculosis (TB) is still the leading cause of death in the world, with six million dying of TB each year. President Bush renewed the 2003 President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) this past July, which represents the largest commitment by any nation to combat a single disease in human history. (A list of participating countries can be found on PEPFAR's website.) The new legislation authorizes up to 48 billion USD to combat global HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. She urged attendees to continue to report on health conditions.

(d) Environmental Security -- OES Office of Policy Coordination and Initiatives (PCI) Patrick Hudak and Office of Science and Technology Advisor to the Secretary (STAS) Alex Dehgan discussed future trends, in particular the increasingly important issue of environmental security. Projected global population growth, coupled with competition for resources and resource degradation will lead to winners and losers and create the potential for instability and conflict. Alex explained practical steps taken by USG and others to address environmental concerns and foster peace and stability in Afghanistan. They urged attendees to work with the U.S. military, use ESTH issues to foster cooperation, and to provide more reporting, particularly on how ESTH issues can spark a conflict, fuel it once it is underway, and/or prevent a sustainable peace.

(e) Renewable Energy -- Ambassador Harnish pointed out that governments are putting more money into research in solar, wind, and geothermal energy, with more than 100 billion USD having been invested globally. Whereas the International Energy Agency (IEA) believed previously that renewable energy would contribute only up to 7 percent of the global energy supply, it now estimates that up to 21 percent of the world's energy supply will be from renewable resources by 2050. In order to bring about a 50 percent reduction in green house gases by 2020, economies will need to employ more renewable energy and clean coal technology, increase efficiency, and consider the use of nuclear power as well. China and India are two major emitters of green house gases, and the U.S. goal is to bring clean energy technology to them. Ambassador Harnish noted the success of the USG-hosted Washington International Renewable Energy Conference (WIREC) in March 2008 and suggested that officers encourage their host countries to fulfill their WIREC pledges on renewable energy commitments.

(f) Biotechnology -- DOS Bureau of Economic, Energy, and Business Affairs (EEB) Division Chief of the Bureau of Agriculture, Biotechnology, and Textile Affairs (TTP) Gary Clements pointed out that biotech and biofuels provide excellent outreach opportunities for the U.S. TTP has outreach funds available for speaker programs, conferences, and workshops and sends out a cable each year (around the beginning of December) requesting input from posts on how TTP should spend its biotechnology outreach funds. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) can also provide U.S.-based training programs for policy makers, journalists, and

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scientists. He urged attendees to work towards boosting agricultural productivity, improve seed technology, keep markets open for U.S. exports, and ensure that international regulations of biotech products are science-based.

(g) Green Buildings -- Manu Bhalla explained the Leadership in Energy and Environment Design (LEED) system of building environmentally "green" buildings that conserve energy and water, reduce waste, have lower operational cost, and are healthy for the occupants. The federal government owns nearly 500,000 buildings and has any opportunity to improve its energy and environmental footprint. The Federal Energy Independence act from December 2007 mandates a 30 percent improvement in energy efficiency in federal buildings by 2015. He urged attendees to launch a green initiative at their embassies and support a Green Building movement in their host countries.

(h) Water and Air Pollution -- OES Office of Environmental Policy (ENV) Bob Sorenson highlighted work to deal with water and air pollution through multilateral cooperation. ENV is also the office responsible for environmental financing through the UN Environment Programme and the related Global Environmental Facility, where we work to ensure that funds go to effective environmental programs and that there is accountability for results. ENV also has responsibility for implementing Environmental Cooperation Agreements related to Free Trade Agreement environmental chapters. He requested more reporting on water issues, as well as local government positions and approaches on other possible pollutants, such as mercury.

(i) Climate Change -- Dr. Harlan Watson, Senior Climate Negotiator and OES Special Envoy to the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, gave a detailed presentation of the current state of climate change negotiations. He urged attendees to focus on the negotiations underway for a post-2012 climate change regime to replace the current Kyoto Protocol. Technology development and financial aid are integral to the negotiations, with private sector investment taking the lead over aid programs. He noted that energy demand and CO2 emissions will continue to increase and emphasized the need for new technological developments that

can bring about an overall global reduction in emissions.

(j) USG Agencies -- U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Christopher Soriano noted that USFS works internationally in 35 countries, assists in disasters, and has considerable expertise on natural resource policies, trade, and conservation. USFS is able to match DOS funding for a number of projects in these areas.

Department of Interior (DOI) Representative Karen Senhadji explained that the Forest Service is an excellent resource for ESTH officers, with onsite training programs in national forests for selected candidates. DOI is involved also in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) and engages in capacity building in park and habitat management.

(k) Public Diplomacy -- Pubic Diplomacy Officer Matt Cassetta rounded out the speaker list by stressing that ESTH issues possess inherent outreach potential, because they involve soft diplomacy and non-controversial issues. Officers should work closely with public affairs at posts to set up visits, grants, and field visits. The OES website has cleared text and guidance that can be used immediately for any press release or speaking engagement. He provided advice on handling climate change policy by suggesting that officers &be honest and not defensive8 about climate change, separate myth from fact, refer to the U.S. actions sheet, stress that the U.S. is seriously committed to the post-2012 Framework negotiation process.

(l) Promoting ESTH -- PDAS Harnish urged attendees to consider future assignments at OES and noted that ESTH issues can promote positively U.S. foreign policy interests. He asked that officers: be &policy entrepreneurs;8 work closely with AID, Ambassadors, management offices, and public

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affairs; and develop alliances to support progress in these vital issues that represent the cutting edge diplomacy of the 21st century.

(6) Innovative Local Programs -- Dr. Waheed Emam, professor of environmental science, stressed that there are more than 400 NGOs in the Egyptian Environmental Federation, which maintains a comprehensive database, helps raise public awareness, provides a link between NGOs and government, and engages in capacity building.

Friends of the Earth (Middle East) Munqeth Mehyer explained how environmental peace activists have used environmental issues to engage in numerous peace projects between Israel and its neighbors. These projects include the Good Neighbor Water Project on the Jordan River and the Jordan River Peace Park, which helped to foster cooperation even during the Palestinian Antifada in 2000.

Plans for the Future

17. Led by their respective hub officers, attendees broke into regional sub-groups to brainstorm concrete ways to advance USG foreign policy interests in each of the conference subject areas (S&T cooperation, environmental security, health, etc.) Suggestions included setting up conferences on eco-tourism, putting a regional security spin on reporting, and ideas with other posts, highlighting successful models, and tapping into IVLP programs, to name a few.

18. OES Bureau and the NEA and SCA Hubs thank the participating agencies for their support of this conference and continued support to the Hub program and individual ESTH officers in the region. The Amman, Astana and Kathmandu Hubs stand ready to provide guidance and coordinate with bilateral

ESTHoffs to share ideas, success models and lessons-learned from the ESTHOC. The Hub team also looks forward to building upon the entrepreneurial spirit shown at this regional conference in fulfilling our regional mandate, supporting the bilateral missions, and advocating for U.S. ESTH foreign policy.

19. OES also thanks Embassy Cairo, in particular Michael Guinan, Lydia Ayoub, Nabil Sayegh, Hany Hamroush, and Abeer Saleh for their help in organizing and supporting the conference. We greatly appreciate the full range of administrative support from GSO, Travel and B&F, without which we would not have been able to hold such a successful conference.

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